FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
(Funded in part by the National Endowment For The Humanities)

(Funded in part by the Keweenaw National Historic Park Advisory Commission / U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service)

CONDITIONS FOR USE OF .PDF TRANSCRIPT:
Finlandia University, formerly Suomi College, holds the exclusive copyright to the entirety of its Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, including this .pdf transcript which is being presented online for research and academic purposes. Any utilization that does not fall under the United States standard of Fair Use (see U.S. Copyright Office or Library of Congress), including unauthorized re-publication, is a violation of Federal Law. For any other use, express written consent must be obtained from the Finnish American Historical Archive: archives@finlandia.edu.

PREFERRED FORMAT FOR CITATION / CREDIT:
“Maki, John”, Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, Finlandia University, Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum.

Note: Should the Finnish American Archive be a resource for publication, please send a copy of the publication to the Archive:

Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum
Finlandia University
601 Quincy St.
Hancock, Michigan 49930 USA
906-487-7347 - fax: 906-487-7557
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
<th>COMMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents came from Norway</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved to Hancock and Calumet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian Immigration Service</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different Nationalities in Schools</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strike - Parade Demonstrations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Very good story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Agassiz</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strike - Citizens Alliance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian Hall</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini-Depression 1920-21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Ford - $5/day</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YMCA</td>
<td>6,12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports: George Gipp and Hunk Anderson</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphidrome</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prohibition - Moonshining</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rambletown Moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling 1920's - The Board of Trade in Houghton</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booze Runner and a Federal Man</td>
<td>9,10</td>
<td>Good anecdote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italians, 1920's</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His Restaurant business and Bar</td>
<td>10,11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression - Restaurant business</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Law</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Different approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics - Voting and Views</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Taxes - Making Deals</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperance Society</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexicans and Germans in Copper Country</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of Tourism</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Home Remedies and Medical Care 16
Recreation 17
Finns were Clannish 17
Churches in Calumet 18
Fourth of July in Calumet 18, 19 Many names & events
Why People stay in Copper Country 19
Comparison of Life today and of 30 years ago 19 Education
Future of Copper Country 20
Tourism 20, 21, 22 Mentions rockhounds
Interview with ALEX NELSON
by Paul Jalkanen 7/28/72

Paul: ---where your parents were from and why did they come to this country in the first place? this kind of background.

Alex: OK. My grandfather came to this country in the '60's, around '66 or so; as I understand it, he failed in business in Norway and he was so ashamed of having failed that he decided to come to America and he came over on a sailing boat and the diary that he wrote was quite interesting. Yes, he wrote and kept a diary; I had it translated but I've since lost it, but he came over on the sailing vessel and they had rough going, but landed here and came to Chicago. Our name really is Omlinson, not Nelson, but one of the brothers, thinking that Omlinson was not common enough, easy enough, so he changed it to Nelson so the four brothers changed it to Nelson. He came to Chicago, and got a job working for the Northwestern Railroad, they were just building the Northwestern rail from Chicago to Green Bay. And as he told it, met a Swede that gave him this job, and they were going to get $4 a day so this was fine and that $4 a day was good money but my grandfather got mad because the fellow didn't tell him that they were going to take $2 a day for board and room. So he quit the job and got another. But anyway he did continue to work until he got up to Ishpeming and there he started a bakery and an ice house and located there and my grandmother joined him later and with my mother and my father went up to work for him. And my father and mother were married in Ishpeming and from that there were 4 children, 2 daughters, 2 sons; I am the youngest.

Are your brothers and sisters alive?

Alex: No, they're all dead, I'm the last of the family

So what happened is that your grandfather came over here, he had already been married in Norway.

Alex: Yes.

Paul: And he had already had children so your father

Alex: He had one daughter in Norway, so far, but my grandmother

Paul: Was your father born in this country then or was he born in Norway?

Alex: My father was born in Norway, near Vaas, and his--I don't have the circumstances under which he came over but he went to Wisconsin and that family, my father's family, are Wisconsinites down near Green County

Paul: The man you're talking about is your mother's father

Alex: my mother's father, but he was quite a businessman and he made money, he liked monopoly, he had the only bakery, in the Ishpeming area, he prospered, then when the Copper Country developed in around 1885, my father took the advice of my grandmother and said, she said, go up to the Copper Country, there's good business up there. So they came up here and started a bakery which was the Star Bakery over in Hancock which has since closed. And then he sold it to his brother, Albert, which earlier people will remember, and you remember Norman Nelson over there? Well, he's of that family, a cousin, and then my father sold it to his brother in Hancock and went up to Calumet, so then he started a bakery in Calumet and I was born up there.

And you were born up there. in 1900.

Alex: In 1900!

Paul: What about some of the stories when you were growing up? what was it like growing up
between 1900 and 1915, 1917, what kind of things do you recollect from your childhood?

Well, number 1, that was in the heyday of Calumet. That was when there were 45-50,000 people there. And we had good living, father had this bakery shop and I remember going to the bakery shop, as a child, every day and to see and get candy and goodies,

So it wasn't only bakery, he had a candy shop, in those days you had a little candy counter and all those things. But our life centered around the Norwegian Lutheran Church and school. Our school was the Franklin School which is now the Morrison and it was a frame building, and we had very good schooling, very good teachers

Do you remember some of your early teachers?

Alex: Yes. I remember Miss Lawrence was the principal, she was part Indian and we used to both fear and respect that, but she was a very fine administrator, and held the respect of all the students. Miss Nelson, my kindergarten teacher, she still has relatives up there in Calumet but we had excellent teachers and I remember around 1908-1910, we started manual training up in Calumet and even down to the grade school. We had a Danish fellow that instituted it because over in Denmark, vocational training was the main thing over there.

Paul: Do you recall some of the early events of the mine up there and what happened yesterday we were talking

Alex: I remember the mine, they were fine people, we may not have gotten the high class of the European nations but we had some very fine people that came to this country from the--and I say that we had our own immigration service. If a fellow from Austria came, he would go to see Mr. Ruppe who was of that area and Mr. Ruppe, if he liked the man and thought he would be good for the area and was not an ex-convict or anything else, they could all help. And then he would get on the job and then he would get all his clothes, mine clothes and everything else, and put him into an Austrian boarding house, probably the fellow who was the prosecuting attorney, but anyway, he would set that man up and course the man could not talk English but Mr. Ruppe would take care of it, he acted almost like banker, counselor, and everything else.

Paul: Did you speak English?

Alex: Oh ya. and Norwegian, too

Paul: Both at home

Alex: Well, I learned my Norwegian in Sunday School, I learned my religion right at the confirmation but then I wouldn't be confirmed in the language I didn't understand thoroughly. I was the one that started the English-Norwegian in our Sunday School because I said I wouldn't be confirmed. So I went confirmation 2 years before--I took second year in English. And from then on that Sunday School changed from Norwegian to--I don't mean that I was individually responsible but I prompted it.

Paul: How did the students get along in the school, once you said some spoke Austrian, German.

Alex: Yes, occasionally we'd get an Austrian family who would come, or an Italian family, and the student would come and he would have to learn--well, we got along fine, No problems, no, no, I think it was a privilege to grow up in Calumet because you had so many different nationalities. You didn't have to know just how to get along with the Finns, but you had to know how to get along with the Italians and, children, of
course, they got along fine.

**Paul**  It was the parents that fought sometimes.

**Alex**  And even they didn't! I think we had one of the finest growing-up areas in the country, right up there, melting pot.

**Paul**  Do you remember the 1913 strike when you were 13 years old?

**Alex**  Yes, very definitely. And I lived on 8th Street, which was in town, and of course the strikers used to have the—and I was just a block away from the Italian Hall, and, but the strikers used to have a parade every morning, 7 o'clock and we'd get up every morning, 7 o'clock, watch the parade. I was 13 then. And we'd get up every morning and watch the parade. And of course we had the militia here. Militia were camped up there and—where the Armory is now, and elsewhere around there. And some were around the mines but the strikers were allowed to parade in the village. But they were not allowed to go on mining company property. And of course then on Elm Street, going into Yellow Jacket, that was the line, and I remember definitely one morning, they had the calvary, they had the horses and there was one group of horses on north 8th and one group on south 8th, and so the strikers were going into Yellow Jacket and there was one spot there that they should not cross. But they had the American flag there, always the American flag. Well, we were there all watching, and all of a sudden, somebody seemed to grab for the American flag to tear down. With that the sabres came out from the people on this side. and these sabres came out and that was one of the most impressive things, but believe me, the parade stopped right there. An about turn and back. When those sabres came out, nobody got hurt and nobody was touched but it was just authority.

**Paul**  It left a lot of bitterness though.

**Alex**  Yes, it did leave a lot of bitterness but I think that bitterness—of course, not ever having worked for the mining company, we that's good, you have a different frame of reference, most people worked for it or yes, no, I never worked for the mines, was never obligated to them, I never asked them for anything that I couldn't pay for. And I do think—everybody remembers that strike. Very few people remember Alexander Agassiz, who was the first good, manager of the Calumet & Hecla. He was the kind of manager that said to his people, in Boston, it was a corporation outside of—foreign corporation you might call it, but the Board of Directors were in Boston and the manager was here.

Like absentee landlords.

Yes, absentee landlords. Now, if the people would go and read Alexander Agassiz' letters that he wrote to his board of directors in Boston, they would find a very fine character. He wrote and said, that if he was to have good workmen, he would have to have good housing. They authorized him to start good housing, but they didn't. All they did, the houses were all identical, but nevertheless, you could have any color you wanted as long as it was red, green or gray, but the thing, and then he said after that, now, we must have good schools and we had good schools. We had better schools than throughout Michigan. Very fine. And they attracted the type of teacher that probably now is comparable probably to those that now are at the universities. But he said, I must have a good library. And he had that library built, and he said, I don't want this to be just a school library, I want it to be a home library. So he wanted something. So a Mrs. Grearson was asked to be the first librarian and she was a marvelous woman; she had a marvelous smile when you went into that library as a child, she would smile at you as if she knew you, and she really made that library what it later became to be. Another thing, there...
were not only English books, there were Austrian books, books from Norway, there were books from—all the various nationalities had books there; this is unusual in most small towns and if a man wanted to know how to build a house, there was a book on carpentry that would help. And the library became a focal point for all the students, it was encouraged, because of the interest of Mrs. Grearson in the people.

Paul: Why did the strike start then? When you were young, you've heard

Alex: Well, ya, I would -- I was going to high school at the time, quite possibly the men were not paid what seemed like enough money. And yet—the miners and the people that I knew, they didn't grumble, they had good food, they were well clothed, they weren't any automobiles, nobody had any automobiles, their children went to good schools and this is something they didn't get where they came from in Norway, in Italy, or in Austria; lot of the people came from Norway especially, and because there wasn't any employment in Norway, they'd still be picking rocks off the farms and so they came over here, they had an opportunity and they welcomed the opportunity and they worked hard; I think it was, again, just like the company was foreign-owned, so was the strike foreign-inspired. And quite possibly the men had legitimate reason for trying to better themselves and they thought maybe they could but why do strikes start today? They're getting good money but they want more. Right? It isn't that they're underpaid.

So one of the reasons could be the outside agitation

I don't think that they could have done it themselves. I don't think that they would. And now this Citizen's Alliance (on the program yesterday), they were called the scabs. I was a citizen's alliance but the citizen's alliance was not scab. This is what I dislike about it. Citizen's alliance was a group of people not necessarily connected with the mine, these were the business people that were in that 4-block area that lived in Calumet and lived in Laurium and did not work for the mining company but they were suffering because of the strike. And so they formed a citizen's alliance to try to get the both sides together. This idea that the citizen's alliance was scab is false. It's true, they were trying to end the strike but they weren't—they might have in a lot of spots leaned toward the company, I can see why that would be because a lot of the business people did business with the mining company and naturally—but however, lot of the business people did business with the miners and on credit and the miners owed them a lot of money. Because they didn't have any money to pay the bills, and the grocer that was supplying the family, didn't want to cut them off but at the same time he needed money to run his own business so they formed a citizen's alliance to try to end the strike, that's all they wanted.

What about the Italian Hall disaster? What kind of recollections do you have of it?

Alex: Well, it was Christmas Eve and I'd gone to Hancock to deliver Christmas tree for my family to a relative down here and I came back and I got off on the corner of Elm and 6th and everything was in a turmoil and I found out then that there had been this and they were carrying the bodies then over to the town hall. They were laid out in the town hall. And I took one look at it and then I went home. But as I remember, it was apparently nothing and it was that somebody yelled "fire" but they were talking about the doors. As I remember there were not two sets of doors.

Paul: There was a set of doors at the top of the stairs and one at the bottom?

Alex: Well, you see that was the miner's headquarters. That was the headquarters for the strikers and that was where the newspaper or whatever was delivered from. We used to pick up a newspaper every week, us kids, just to see what's going on. But that was the headquarters. Ok, now, but the fault was not with the mining company, or the strikers, the fault was with the design of the doors downstairs. It opened in.
And whatever may have happened, I would say that it's hard for me to accept that anyone connected either with the mining company or with the militia or with the Wadell men or any of them would yell "fire" into a place like that, I don't think that they felt that bad about it.

Paul: Why didn't the strike finish then? Here you had this massive disaster, 70-some people killed but the strike went on. Must have been a lot of bitterness right afterwards.

Alex: Oh, yes, of course, just like now

Paul: You'd think they would kind of pull together after a disaster like that.

Alex: As I remember I think that was the breaking point, I think the spirit went out it and as I remember, that took the spirit out of the employees organization, I mean the Western Federation of miners.

Paul: What other recollections, here you were going to school, you'd go into 1919

Alex: Ya, I graduated in 1919

Paul: You'd been working in your father's restaurant, your brothers and sisters also?

Alex: Ya, ya

Paul: What kind of money did your father make, can you give us an idea, was it pretty good business?

Alex: Well, previous to that we were in the bakery business on the corner of 7th and Elm, and then my father was also in the insurance business which is now the D. J. Leveque Agency and then during the strike, we had to leave, because my father's business went down, so he sold it and we went to Ironwood to get connected with a co-op in Ironwood but the co-op in Ironwood was on shaky grounds and failed within a year and so we returned and that's when we started in 1915, so I missed that one year so that's why my recollection of what happened--that one year I was in school in Ironwood. And we returned in 1915 and went to Calumet school and we had our restaurant. Even after that, the World War I was coming along and copper was needed and so the mines again went full blast and we put in our restaurant and bakery on 5th street in Calumet which is now the Parkside. And we made fairly good money because we were paying up bills from the Ironwood disaster and paying for the investment for our own and in 1919 we saw fit to put in this restaurant in Houghton.

That was the individual effort on your own

Alex: Ah, no, we operated as a family. My brother

Paul: Your uncle down here

Alex: no, we were entirely separated from that group, you see my father sold to my uncle so that was entire separation, OK, but then when we were successful in Calumet with the Nelson's Restaurant and Bakery in Calumet, then we started one down here, just a restaurant, no bakery. While it was successful in the early years but then came the depression, see, so there was a semi-depression in '21 here.

That's right. Do you remember a lot of people leaving?

Yes. You'd go down to the train in the morning and there'd be trainloads of people leaving.

Paul: In 1920-21. Where were they going? Do you have any idea?
Alex: That was the beginning of Detroit and Flint and those places. Henry Ford advertised $5-a-day minimum, so everybody went down there; there was work and these people were the people that came from Europe and they were adventurers, they were not afraid to move.

Paul: Did some go back to Europe?

Alex: I think so. Quite likely. Because some of those people, I remember, one of the miners said, well, they could make $9 a day contract, 9-12-14 dollars a day when Ford was guaranteeing $5 a day but a man with a good physique and could be a good trammer or a good miner, he could contract and make $9 a day and he could save it because he didn't spend much. And so then he says in 10 years I'll make enough to go back to the old country and which a lot of 'em did. Worked for 10 years and retired. But they could retire over there with what they made over here. And they had a lot of money over there. That's what.

Paul: So you opened up a business down here, you and

Alex: my sister and I came down and opened up this business down here. I think though that my recollections of school there, high school in Calumet, that was definitely one of the finest parts of my life. Because we had C. L. Phelps for superintendent principal, and E. J. Fall for superintendent and we had good schools, we had the best library.

Paul: What kind of things did you do for fun? School and church were your 2 major things

Alex: My sister and I belonged to that and we were down to that and we were down there every afternoon; swimming pool; 3 days a week we went on the floor and played basketball and whatever, swimming pool, we could go in there every day; that was our hang-out.

Paul: That was the hang-out for high school kids

Alex: and it was very good, very good

Paul: we'll take a break and turn over the tape
Do you have any recollections of your high school?

My recollections of the YMCA and the high school were both, the YMCA had the basketball floor but the high school did not have a gymnasium. So that was the gymnasium for the high school. They played all games and I remember George Gipp and Hunk Anderson down there. Used to be a wonderful pool player.

So they had pool halls, too?

Oh, yes.

strict home life?

Alex: Yes, but we never had liquor in our home until way late.

Did you do anything, was Sunday pretty well devoted to church and staying home?

Alex: Right. Well, the afternoon you could go out bicycling or something like that or playing ball.

Paul: Some people I’ve talked to said, no.

Alex: Not even playing ball. This is true. It was extra. There was a very strict order. I as a youngster, young person, having been connected with the YMCA and the basketball, I couldn’t see why a church basement should be closed up 6 days a week and just opened up on Sundays for Sunday School. We should have basketball in there and used, be permitted—but I never got my way with it. (laughter)

Paul: It wasn’t a very good idea.

Alex: No, no. But it was—like I said, we knew good athletics and George Gipp would say, (my nickname was "Snowball" because of my white hair) "all right, Snowball, let’s play a game,"I was one of the best pool players of my age, I could clear the table once but I couldn’t start over again. He could clear it once but he always wanted to play, only for a dollar-a-game. I never had the dollar to put up so, well, of course, he was kidding, "OK, Snowball, I’ll play you for a buck".

Paul: How old were you, 17? 16?

Alex: Ya, 16. Of course, then shortly after that he was going down to Notre Dame, the Gipper. He had a marvelous personality for sports. He didn’t recognize defeat at all.

Paul: Were you involved in any other sports, play basketball or anything?

Alex: No, I was spectator, I was usually the manager of the team. Because I wasn’t big enough for it. That was required for most of the sports, except pool.

Or those kind of things. You didn’t have to be tall, or strong.

Alex: Right.

What about the running the restaurant down here, what was that like? Good business when you started?

Yes, we opened up on a Saturday and that was after the war and at that time the Amphidrome was the main place for dances and they used to have nationally-known bands, orchestras, come in. And they packed the place. There’d be mobs. Oh, 5-6-700 people down there because there wasn’t any other place. Well, I think it was the
American Legion that used to run those things and anyway, we opened up on Saturday, we wouldn't open up on a Friday, we were superstitious and we never started anything on a Friday but we opened up on a Saturday and we were packed. And we sold everything we had—ice cream, everything, so we had to close up because we ran out of food. even though we were well stocked, it wasn't that we just had a little bit.

Did your father help you start the business.

Oh, ya, my father was good patron and he helped out but he didn't have much to do with this Houghton store, it was my sister and my brother and I. But business was good up until the depression. And then it was rough.

It was good up until 1929-1930?

Alex: Until '30. And then after that it became rough and it was a touch-and-go proposition because whatever you made from 1920-30, you almost lost between '30 and '33.

Paul: But you kept going, though

Alex: Ya, and then we put in beer because when beer came in, everybody

Paul: That was 1933 then

Alex: ya, ya

Paul: What do you remember about prohibition days?

Oh, well, Rambulltown moon was very well known throughout the United States, you know.

Paul: Oh, was it?

Alex: Oh yes. You could buy Rambulltown moon in Buffalo. It was called Rambulltown Moon.

Paul: People up here made money during prohibition.

Alex: Oh, yes, many of them. The Italians knew how to make wine and the Austrians that knew, the Scandinavian people you never heard of them making it because I don't think they knew how, they didn't know how to start it, but the Italians and the Austrians used to make their own wine, I 'spose in Italy, and so it was just natural for them. And according to hearsay, the general manager McNaughton said, if they can't make enough money in the mines, let 'em make moon. And so while they weren't officially protected, likewise, they were not easily bothered. They weren't harrassed.

Paul: The law authorities didn't do nothing

Alex: well, they knew it was there and they knew they could go and get it any time they want.

Was it down here in Houghton, too, when you were running

no, no

were there any speak-easy's or anything?

There was one speak-easy down here; well, when we came in the Board of Trade, where the Library is now, was one place. (interruption)
Paul: You were talking about prohibition there.

Alex: Well, you asked me if there were any speak-easy's or anything, well, I remember when we first came in here, 1920's, and when we came in in the '20's, well, where the Library Bar is now, it was called the Board of Trade and they had a Chinese cook and a Chinese family lived right next to the restaurant where I was and in the Haba Building and good food and a fellow, Mr. French ran it, and he--and there was a fellow called Sackrider, he used to run the gaming tables, and they gambled there every night.

Paul: Is that right?

Oh, yeh.

It's against the law.

Ya, I know, but nobody ever bothered 'em there, they had the roulette wheel and the gaming table; I never was there but a fellow used to come into the restaurant and borrow $5 from me every night and come back the next day and pay me, but he always played on borrowed money, he was lucky, fine fellow, and Mrs. Sackrider was kind, very colorful; Tom Gundson was the gaming table man, very well respected, when you went down there, the story was that you played according to Tom Gundson's rule and he ran the gaming table; yup, and Mrs. Sackrider up on the street the next morning, and go over to the flower shop, get a flower for his lapel and start looking around and that was his characteristic.

Paul: Did they have drinking down there then little bit?

Alex: Oh, yes. Quite sure they did. Well and then I do know that down the Board of Trade afterwards, it became more or less a speak-easy but no gaming tables and no food; they more or less just strictly a speak-easy.

Paul: Toward the end of the '20's. Before prohibition went out.

Alex: Ya, and you could go down there, but it seemed as though, like the Rambulltown moon, as long as they didn't run into bad moonshine where anybody got sick, I mean, what we got up here was good moon, what they got in Detroit was the kind that would make somebody blind, so that was the difference, it is said, I don't know how true this is but it was said that whenever they confiscated any of that, they saved it for the hospitals but whether that's true or not, I don't know. I wouldn't doubt but maybe some of the people connected with the hospital, got it. (laughter)

Paul: Any other recollections about the prohibition days?

Well, there was a fellow called Nelson who was a federal man and we were quite well established then down at Houghton and we had our No. 1 booth and Nelson was typically a federal man. He was a federal officer, I mean, he would serve papers. And he knew who these people were but of course until papers were served, he didn't do it. And he would sit side by side with a booze-runner, in No. 1 booth, and have coffee. And he'd say, well, now, remember if I get papers, I'm coming to serve 'em and he knew him, knew exactly where he lived, knew where everything was. But if he didn't have papers, he didn't serve.

Paul: A lot of papers were not served then, really.

Alex: Ya, until he got and then finally he did get papers. And he served them on the guy. Well, the guy, at the time when he said, if I get papers, he said, well, ya I know but I'm going to have this right here too and you'll throw that away and which the man did. He was taking liquor from Canada over to
Paul: What did they do, go by ship from land in Houghton or Hancock?

Alex: They would be on their way to Isle Royale but, you see, if the compass wasn't right they would land in Canada

Go to Thunder Bay

Ya, well, it was just—that darn compass —, so then they would come back and then they would have to pay for it, to make the story good, they would have to take the compass off and send it in and have it fixed, but they would have their load of liquor (laughter) but a lot of times, they didn't get away it, because it might be that somebody in Canada might have notified somebody here; all that I don't know anything about, but it was hearsay, it was skuttlebut going on.

Paul: Ya, pretty common talk

Alex: Ya, it was common talk, but we didn't have problems, or trouble or war or anything like that

Paul: no, not much fighting or anything

Alex: no, it was very legitimate, everything was done on the up-and-up, nothing like you might say, the mafia had down there. This is where we didn't, as I spoke, the service we had of screening the people when they came in; if a man came in—he was from Sicily—the Italians, Mr. Kyotta or Michetti or whoever might be in here, if he was from the wrong part of Sicily, they didn't get a job. They would be—he would say, well, I'm broke, I can't do anything, well, here's $50, go back to Chicago and go to Cicero and you'll get a job there. So in that way we screened out the undesireables.

Paul: What else can you tell about restaurant life? Tough?

Alex: Yes. It's not an easy way to make money

Paul: Not a lot of money to be made?

Alex: No, not a lot

Paul: Can't become wealthy

Alex: No.

Paul: Live decently.

Alex: Yes, we had good living, we were never hungry. but it didn't mean we didn't owe a lot of money, we were eating on credit; then again, when business got good, we made it up. No, it's not easy; long hours, and it's easy to—you could loose money easily if you didn't know how to manage your—financing and food, I mean, waste. You have the story when we were running the restaurant; now we have of course the perfectionist, the Big Boy and like that have it all down and

Paul: What did things sell for at that time? 1920, 1925?

Alex: Hamburgers were 20¢, ice cream sodas were 15¢, and we were selling Coke for a nickel, and they would get Coke, and when I came here in '41, Coke was a nickel and the kids would come in from the high school and have a nickel Coke and go back in the booth and we'd fill the place with kids with a nickel Coke. No volume there, you can't make money.

Paul: No, they gotta buy more than that
Ya, So then we had to change it, we changed it to a minimum of 10¢. They had to spend 10¢. (It's laughable now, isn't it?) And some of the kids didn't want to spend 10¢, they only wanted to spend a nickel, they didn't get much money in those days.

When did you bring in beer then? You had a kind of a two-room, restaurant one side and

No, we ran it all together. The Golden Pheasant opened up and they sold 8 barrels of beer the first night. Well you stop and figure--8 barrels--and in each barrel there's "x" number of glasses and you get—I think they were selling for 10¢ then or even 15¢ a glass and you multiply that and it only cost you "x" number of dollars for a barrel, think of the money that you're making so that's nine barrels and think of the money you'd make in one night, that opening night, well, this was tempting and my brother would hear this and we were selling ice cream sodas for 15¢ and all this and here we had a place and they were all going to the bars then for their beer and we were empty so it became tempting, so we said well, why don't we put in just beer? Beer and wine. So we put it in. And we were successful in it, and we'd have MacNord's orchestra on Thursday nights and have dancing, not dancing, you had to have a license to have dancing but you could have an orchestra there and we had a floor show for the customers where the entertainers, Cy Evans would sing, "the girl on the magazine cover," and Will Hall would come in and sing October and a better singer than Will Hall you never heard for a baritone and so we had—no drunks because you could sit and drink beer and nobody drank that much in our place anyway that they got drunk.

Paul: So it was really kind of a good beer

Alex: Good sociable place

Paul: Did you build up some steady business then

Yes, we did but then we went into dinner business but it was not really until the '40's that we started.

Paul: What about depression days, recollections, 1930's, before the war started? Here you are going downtown everyday and I'm sure you have people coming in that are really hurting, tough.

Alex: Yes, my time I spent in Calumet during the depression days.

Paul: Oh, did you?

Alex: Yes.

Paul: Give up the restaurant?

Alex: No, no, see we had a restaurant in Calumet first, 1915. In 1919 we started this one. But we still had the Calumet one, and we made money right up to the depression but not a lot of money that you could put it away or anything. But we made a good living. And we bought an automobile and changed into a better automobile, like that. So we were supposedly successful, because we didn't wander. But then the depression comes. Bread was selling for 10¢ a loaf, and stuff like that. There wasn't an awful lot, and very hard to make money. And I do remember every day a little fellow about 6 years old would come in and he'd say, anything for Lapin? Now Lapin would get the stalest. A bag of stalest and they were just tickled to death to get them. Something we couldn't sell. And I'm not bragging about this, but this little fellow everyday, nice little smile, would come in and he was very polite, anything for Lapin? And Lapin would get a bag—I 'spose enough to take back to keep that family from going
hungry. And I 'spose there were a lot of people that did that. We shared

You said you were running a restaurant up there then, too, both of them the same
time? Did you take a street car up?

We had a Model-T Ford. No, I stayed right at the Calumet shop. My brother was down
here managing this, my brother and his family.

Paul: So you went up there and managed that one. Was your father dead then?

Alex: Well, my father sort of retired, but he was there. He'd open up every morning but
my sister, Hannah and myself, ran that place.

Paul: During the '30's and up until the war.

Alex: Ya.

Paul: You had a lot of C&H workers up there who were in tough shape.

Alex: Yes. But they seemed to be well taken care of, the YMCA served as distributing
point for food and they ruined the YMCA, however, they didn't take good care of it,
well, it was abused, the showers, they'd tear the showers out, there was no need
for it.

Paul: People would come in and do that?

Alex: Somebody did, but who was in charge, Mr. Long, who was the administrator here for
WPA and anything like that, he was the boss man, I don't say he did it, but he didn't
prevent it either.

Paul: People were vandals at that time, too

Alex: Oh, absolutely. We had that. Not to such a great extent.

Or not as well known, maybe.

Alex: Well, no we didn't have as much vandalism, I'll say that. I don't know why, you
see a good point here is the worse thing--you couldn't do this to a 12-year old or
14-year old, but a man--there was paternalistic--there was paternalism of the company;
if a man did some moral wrong;

Paul: adultery

Alex: well, not so much adultery but for instance chased women in the dark streets at
night, and this they didn't want, the C&H policed their area,
but the streets were not well lit, but if a man was talked to and one was and he
was not just a miner, he was an official, the worse sentence you could get was to be
ordered to leave town. Now this man had a responsible job and a nice family, 2
beautiful daughters, well, I'm sorry Mr. so-and-so, you will have to leave town
by the 1st of the month. So he had to leave and he could never come back. But you
see, this was the kind of law that they had.

Paul: It was not always just putting them in jail. Excile.

Alex: He wasn't arrested at all. Absolutely. Don't return. So you see, when that gets
around that Mr. so-and-so was asked to leave, why you can be sure that another Mr.
so-and-so is going to be very careful that he doesn't get caught.

Paul: When is the first time that you voted for president?
1924, probably be, I was 21 in '21

Paul: Coolidge at that time

Alex: Harding and then Coolidge; and yes in politics you grew up and your politics were what your family was almost like

to a certain extent

in 1912, when I was in the 8th grade, we'll say, we had a mock election and I think I was the only one that voted for Taft (laughter) everyone else was voting for Roosevelt, the progressive, Teddy Roosevelt; and he came up here and campaigned up here, too.

Lot of people came up here because it was a major area

Alex It was. Well, you see, after all this was the beginning of the industrialization of America, without copper, we wouldn't have had it. This was the place for industrialization of America.

Did you ever run for public office at all?

Alex: No

Paul Not really involved in politics.

Alex No, no. I voted every time and I spoke my mind but I'll say this, I could never forget a winner because most of the time I was wrong, I never was very good at that.

Paul: Did you change political affiliations, (I don't know if you even want to talk about this) did you change? during the '30's when the depression was going on?

Alex: no, I didn't, later years I became an Independent, I could never have been called a good Democrat, but I leaned towards the Republican I 'spose because maybe I'm conservative and now we recognize that a lot of things that were instituted then were good things and it wasn't that I was against them but I didn't have the ability to foresee how we could ever pay for it.

Paul So it's the same problem today

Ya. I didn't visualize deficit spending that the United States, how many billion are we in the hole,

Paul: tremendous

Alex: and there's no ceiling because every time we reach the ceiling, we raise it again. So you see it's fictitious but I mean—we were the kind—and I still am, I live on a cash basis and I spend what I earn but not go into debt

Alex: I don't mind going into debt as long as you can see where you have a systematic way of repaying. Now, of course they say the government and railroad, they never intend to pay but they just replace it with another issue of bonds. But I can't see the value of any country going two-hundred-billion dollars in debt.

Paul: Like for taxes on the restaurant, did you go down and try to lobby a little bit to make sure they weren't too heavy?
Board of Review, yes. I never objected to paying taxes, as long as taxes were level, the same for somebody else, I mean, my competitor, or some other building. And if the assessed valuation was 12,000 and somebody put in a new restaurant with all new equipment and was down for 5, then I would say that that was discrimination. I said, I don't care, you don't have to raise him up to 12 but then you better lower me down to 5.

Was this going on in the '30's?

Oh, very definitely.

Hanky-panky politically?

Alex: Well, a man would be friendly with the assessor and maybe do him a little favor, it still goes on, it's been going on just as the past couple years, I mean friendly with the assessor or the Board of Review and that isn't wrong, it's legitimate I 'spose.

It's not so legitimate, really

Alex: well, supposing I was a used car salesman and you were the assessor. And you wanted a 1969 or '70 Chevrolet and I sold it to you at a pretty good price, there's nothing wrong with that!

Paul: No. But if I came back and taxed you like everybody else, then you wouldn't be too happy.

Alex: No. But I've got to deal with the assessor and you wouldn't do that. Because you're going to go back to him the next year and get another one. Right?

Paul: Ya. Did you take care of your customers like that?

Alex: What do you mean?

Paul: People that came into the restaurant that you knew that had political power and persuasion?

Alex: No, no. We never catered to a political power. And that was a case of No. 1 booth that was the main thing there and we were friendly with all of 'em, and they came in.

(end of tape)

Alex: (continued on next tape) No. 1 booth was, of course, an institution in the Houghton restaurant, Nelson's Restaurant, Houghton. And there when we started the restaurant every, shall we say, customer, that came in every morning and every afternoon for his coffee, would get a free cup of coffee on Friday afternoons. Just a gimick, not that they wanted a free coffee but it built up a certain comraderie, friendship amongst us all and that was the group and we called it No. 1 booth. And we always had No. 1 booth, they wouldn't go in any other booth and so when it got too many for the one booth, we put tables out and so we all sat around there. That started 6:30 in the morning and people like Jack Rule, who worked for Wenberg (the people that sold Studebakers) and he would be the first customer and then would come Mike Messner, young Mike Messner, and Jack Rice, and then Dr. John Aldrich, the dentist, who still does it, goes down there the first thing in the morning, or did, and we used to say there were men from everywhere because we had such a diverse group and the next morning we got a report from everybody on what went on the night before. And heaven help you if you stubbed your toe the night before because you were going to get it from the whole booth the next morning. But it was a select group but it was not gauged upon the amount of money you had because (I used to say) the street sweeper could come in and sit down and have a
cup of coffee as well as the banker and we had both banks, both banks were represented and the newspaper and all.

Paul: Let's say, not these people so much, but maybe some of the others who came in, what kind of things did they get upset about? All the way through your restaurant business starting early days, 1915-1919, what kind of things did people get riled up about? What upset them?

Alex: You mean particularly in our restaurant?

Paul: Not so much angry at the restaurant but angry at the world. Angry at the company or angry at some business, or whatever it might be.

oh, (blank spot in tape)

Paul: ----certain people were upset about, I don't know, I just thought that there might be you, and then of course authorities when you got beer, there'd be certain type things that would be irritating people at different times, I just wonder if there are certain things that you recollect that upset people.

Alex: Ya, there were some things and of course it would involve largely government decisions But (I was just trying to think)

You mean like social security coming in, or WPA or something like that.

They didn't get upset; when I was up in Calumet I 'spose I was the younger then, that was in the '20's, I was in the younger group then and we weren't the kind who would sit down and accept all these things. Some of the things—like in the schools—

What did people think about the prohibition, did they think it was kind of silly, kind of stupid?

Alex: Oh, yes. There was a temperance union up in Calumet years ago, we belonged to that and

Paul: What was it like?

Alex: And there was a temperance hall on Scott street in Calumet, and they used to have "coffee socials" every Saturday night and lot of the drunks would come up there and have coffee, some of the Norwegians that had too much "you know", it was largely a Norwegian church sponsored group.

Paul: Ya, because the Finns had a temperance society

Alex: Now I don't say that this was only Norwegian, but largely sponsored by the Norwegian Luth. church. Course I think what the people thought was the disrespect for law that prohibition brought. Broke down all respect for law and order. If you can do that then you can do anything. And then other laws were

Paul: That big law was—if you could violate that, you could violate little ones.

Alex: Sure, so what if a man was convicted—a banker when he embezzled—

Paul: What about temperance society, you mentioned that you were part of one

Alex: Well, there were that and I took the pledge in drinking in my church, Mrs. Rasmussen, she was very strong for it; she didn't want us to, so the young people took the pledge not to drink until they were 21; they felt that by that time you were capable of making your own decisions and of not drinking to excess. So we took a pledge not to drink until we were 21. And I did. I stood by it. It was a way of life up
there of moonshining and they just accepted and went along, sure, you knew bought it all the time, it was a violation that you did not put in the same category as if you went out and shot a man or if you went out and really beat him up or assault and battery or something like that. That was bad like when we had the Mexicans here during World War I and the Mexicans came up here and they were equipped with a knife, and so as soon as the war was over the Mexicans were sent back.

The company brought them up?

Ya. They needed miners. And they brought in Mexicans. But we weren't accustomed to having people throw knives and after World War I, Petermann, the attorney, he was of German descent and had connections in Germany, and he brought over a good German workers and that's where you get some of the German people now. But it was not thought to be bad.______.

Paul: What was the best time of the year? Summertime, for you? For tourists?

Alex: In those days we didn't have tourists, we didn't start tourism until in the '30's And then it was Ocha Potter who told us that we had such a beautiful country and he had traveled an awful lot and he said we're "missing the boat" by not having tourists up here and of course, during the depression, this was when the United States said they want big WPA projects that would employ a lot of men but not use up much material. And of course Mr. Potter being mining superintendent and a good engineer devised this means of building the Brockway Mountain Drive and Keweenaw Park Resort which took some saws to cut down; you see he was the father of our tourism as far as I'm concerned. He inspired people to come in.

Paul: What was the medical life like?

Alex: My earliest recollection of medical life was the C&H took care of the large part; they had their own hospital and their own doctors. Those of us who did not work for C&H would have to pay; C&H people didn't have to pay for their doctors or medicines or hospitals, they got that with them and this is one of the fringe benefits that the strikers didn't remember and I'm not saying that it made up for the rest of it, but we who were in business, had a separate--Dr. Rhodie was our family doctor and we paid him by the year and he would make house calls, summer and winter, and a awfully good doctor and he worked out of the Tamarack Mining Company hospital and I remember when I was supposed to go have my tonsils out and I walked up to the hospital which was a half-mile or so, and had them "clipped" (what they called clipping), I remember they held me down and opened my mouth and they clipped me, and he asked me, this was between Thanksgiving and Christmas, he asked me "did you have any mince pie for Thanksgiving" and I said "no", he said, "well, you'll be able to eat it Christmas time" and I walked home. Alone. As a young boy but that was not considered unusual.

Paul: Did your mom have some home remedies?

Alex: Oh, yes, coming from Norway, they had very good education in home folks cooking.

Paul: Do you remember some of those?

Alex: Not except that when you had a cold you were rubbed with mentholatum and you were--that hot plaster—that was quite common, also a mustard foot bath was the common thing. They'd give you the mustard foot bath right away but anyway it seemed to work. We didn't have aspirin so we had to use things like that. And brandy, there was only a half-a-bottle of brandy in the house and that was only used extreme emergencies.

Paul: It didn't come out very often?
Alex: No; no; but we had good doctors, a lot of doctors came up here for their intern-
ship but we have good doctors. Dr. Lawba from the C&H was a very fine man; but
in those days medicine wasn't as far advanced as it is now. The operations were
appendicitis and tonsils.

What kind of things did you do when you weren't In the restaurant?

You mean recreation? Volleyball and things like that, and when you talked about
what made you upset sometime, we would like to use, this was after the high school
gym got in there, and we wanted to use the high school gym Monday nights for volley-
ball and we were refused and being connected with business I went up to see Mr. E.
J. Hall and said, "for heaven's sake, why close it?" He said "it cost us a lot of
money for lights" and I said "well, then we'd better look into the electrical rates
if it's costing that much, he told me how much it was, but we used to play volley-
ball and played a lot of cards, smear and right in the restaurant and during the
depression we had bridge class on Monday nights, we'd have 18 tables; down in the
restaurant in Calumet. And we played 18 tables of duplicate bridge and for 25¢.
We charged everybody 25¢, that was a $1 a table, we took in $18, that was $12 more
than we would have taken in otherwise. And for that they played bridge and they
got a sandwich and a cup of coffee. But this was the recreation that we had in
days. Played bridge, volleyball, golf, played out on the Swedetown Golf Course,
and that was clay greens, no grass greens, but we played out there; there was a fellow
called Lukazich who runs the Lukazich Store now in Calumet, he was the best one out
there then. And he just played with 2 clubs. Putter and No. 1.

Paul: What do you remember about the Finnish population? What kind of feelings do you
have? They're considered kind of the predominant nationality grouping, not a majority
but a large minority.

Alex: Largest minority, definitely. As we knew them, they were always known as hard
workers, good people

Paul: Did they pay their bills at the restaurant?

Alex Yes. You never had trouble with Finnish credit. In fact we had a lot of people that
were charging and not paying but none of the Finnish people.

Paul: Other Scandinavians the same way?

Well, most of the Scandinavians were good credit. They were good people; however, as
I was growing up, they always seemed to keep to themselves; they may have felt that
they were not wanted or weren't accepted, however I think it was largely they retired
to themselves because ma and pa retired, didn't get out; didn't mix. Whereas the
other nationalities, they went out; the Norwegians went out. The Swedes went out.
They were part of the "establishment" where the Finnish people, to a large extent,
even their leaders retired to themselves; they were sufficient to themselves.

So they were more clannish than the others?

Alex: Very definitely. That's the way I remember them and it's only the last 20 years,
25 years, that the Finnish people have become—but you see, they're good people, they
saved their money and if you look at the land plats now, the Finnish people own
most of the land.

Paul: They got in and they bought some.

Alex: They bought land. They bought land that we hold.

Paul Nobody wanted.
Supposedly we didn't want. All Chassell Bay, you'll find that they own practically 90% of it. But they were smart investors. What seemed like not good land for somebody else was recognized by this Finnish person as good land.

Any other recollections about the Finns who came into the restaurant when you were in Calumet or Houghton?

They were not our biggest part of our business because the Finnish people did a lot of their baking themselves but they did come in and buy cream puffs and things they didn't make. When I grew up in Calumet, when we had all these people we didn't accept or reject them because of their nationality. My best friends are in Calumet.

You can't make a difference if you're a restauranteur

No, and that made no particular--I can't recall--that's why I said that it was a privilege to grow up in Calumet at that time, we had 27 churches, different nationalities, maybe that wasn't the best for religion but nevertheless, I remember one minister came up here and saw 27 and thought, gee, this must be a religious country and then he found out that the churches were only 1/3 full on Sunday morning in the '30s. I remember when I was going school, you knew that your seatmate was Italian, and that fellow was a German and all that but you didn't accept or reject because of the nationality.

Most people were pretty good churchgoers.

Oh, ya, there was a good church following up here and that was the social center, we had nothing else. Like the Norwegian Church there'd be a social every Saturday night.

What kind of other events? What did you do on the 4th of July?

That was the big parade and we had the big Rueben Sherry Carnival. Calumet was the best carnival city in the United States at that time. And that's not exaggeration. The carnival people published their and Calumet would help them, well, here was a group of people who didn't have their transportation except trains, local, we couldn't, the 45,000, go to Chicago to see a show or entertainment, the entertainment came to them. And the carnival was that "thing", oh, you had carnivals right on 5th & Elm right in town. They put the tents up right town. Fourth of July was a big parade, circus parade like now down in Milwaukee, not as long but we had the wild animals in their cages and the steaming caliope. It was one of the best carnival circus towns. But then we had shows at the Calumet Theatre. We had 3 movie theatres. We had the Royal, the Grand and the Crown plus the Calumet Theatre but we had good stock company; we had Frank Winegar, who later went out to Hollywood, and we had Frisco Hare come out here with his show, we had the English Opera Company, we had like you're hearing about now, with the Calumet Theatre now.

Do you think there is any particular social problem in the Copper Country, Drinking, loneliness, conflicts between nationality groups, anything that makes it any different than any other area? More drinking here than some other place?

Oh, I don't know--The Copper Country was known for years as a heavy drinking area, by traveling men that would come up here. Where they might spend only one day in Ishpeming and one day in Marquette but they would save the week-end for the Copper Country.

They'd stop at the restaurant?

No so much the restaurant as the Douglas House and the Douglas House Bar and then they would be here for a week. Of course when you had 47 saloons on Main Street
of Calumet, and of course we had the finest fireworks of anyplace because the saloons all chipped in for the fireworks display.

They had the money to put into it then?

They had the money to put into it. Of course it helped to have the Chief of Police go around and collect. (laughter) This wasn't forced but the policeman took charge of collecting money and ordering it and they protected the fireworks down on Bracco's Barn and we kids couldn't go near that barn for 3 weeks before the 4th of July while the fireworks were there, you didn't even go near it. Because nobody would want it to blow up before the 4th.

Why do people stay here? Through the good times and even the hard times?

The people who stay here are the people who like the environment, they can work, they're not making a lot of money but in 15 minutes if they want to, they can be out fishing. Fishing, hiking, and one of the things that they damned the mining company was that they wouldn't sell their property, you couldn't buy they property, you could lease it. This has been a God send to us now. Do you realize it?

Do you think so?

Because where else do you go where you don't see fences and you don't see No Trespassing signs. There isn't any place. And happens, a fellow from Detroit comes up here and buys Ezra Park and immediately puts up No Trespassing signs. Now we don't have those up to now and we haven't had it. The man who worked in the mine, he belonged to his own hunting club; he could hunt all over, hunt and fish, where else do you get that? Where you get 55,000 acres that you can hunt and fish and this is what the people like and plus the kind of people that we have, and this was through our immigration service, (maybe I'm not 100% correct in this) but this was true and you didn't have the immigration service for the Scandinavian countries but for the other countries, they had their own; but we have a "bunch" of hard-working, honest people, and the kind of people who would help each other share when somebody was sick, a widow when a miner was killed, that widow was taken care of. We didn't have Aid to Dependent Children but her family didn't go hungry.

Some other recollections or reminiscences?

Is life better today than it was 20-30 years ago?

Alex: I would say, in general, yes. We have more of the finer things in life, automobiles, and ways of making money—even persons out of jobs make more money than people that work in those days—a man on relief can go buy a car and there weren't cars available those days. But nevertheless those people lived well. They had a good family life.

Family life, and education, gotten worse?

Alex: Education gotten worse? No, I don't think education has gotten worse, we have lot more frills now; in Calumet High School, we didn't have frills, we didn't even have a school newspaper but we have good now a third grade teacher today teaches 20 subjects. Why? Then the child gets up to high school and even goes to Michigan Tech and can't spell. And their mathematics! We had good mathematics. We had excellent math in Calumet High School. I can't judge it but I do know their spelling is bad. I don't say Calumet but people in Detroit and spell summer "s-o-m-m-e-r", and Suomi choir "q-u-i-r-e". Of course the automobile has changed a lot

(end of tape)

has changed the mode of living; I have a very high regard for the young people of today.
Paul: You don't damn them?

Alex: I have a very high regard for them. When I grew up we accepted what our parents said as Gospel. And I think our parents told us what they thought was the truth about this, that and the other thing, very much, very puritan, and we accepted what the politicians said, the young people of today don't. They think for themself!

Paul: More questioning you mean?

Alex: Yes, much more questioning and I don't say I respect all but by the same token I wouldn't be like some of them that condemn all. I don't judge a man by the length of his hair; I was out to the Frisbee Tournament and I stayed out there because I wanted to see and I think there were 6,000 or more people out there and fine young people. Sure, Stroh's Beer sponsored it but I only saw 3 young people that I thought got out of hand. Of course I wasn't in the bar at 1 o'clock at night but from what I understand the only trouble was with "locals" that were older. The young people they didn't have that trouble. Sure, the young people got into automobile accidents and quite possibly that was caused by poor driving, might have been that they had too much to drink; there were more young people out there so the chances for having young people get into accidents was there, but they were just a fine "bunch" of young people having fun. And enjoying life and not asking anybody for anything. Sure, they went out to sleep in sleeping bags on Lake Manganese but they were good.

Paul: What kind of things does this area need now? What's going to happen to the Copper Country in the next 20 years?

Alex: Well, it appears to me, Education is No. 1, Suomi College and Michigan Tech, will be our main industries; lumbering will be another major industry as one of the professors says, we got "trees coming out of our ears" --

Paul: It should be a kind of "controlled kind of lumbering" shouldn't it?

Alex: It's growing faster than we're cutting it, so were not hurting it, sure it should be controlled; I don't believe in cutting down the Estivant Pines and they should be protected just because of their very nature, being the largest pine in the State of Michigan and right on the heels will be tourism. And I look for tourism to change, to be a bigger deal, up to now we have had a lot of people that start out with an investment of $30,000 and makes 5 units for a motel and in 5 years he adds 10 more and they will be there but I look for a bigger complex where you will have the hotel-motel and the recreation area, the golf course and swimming pool right with it the complete recreation area and Universal Oil looks for this same thing although they will not be the operator, they will be the landlord. And according to the engineers we haven't touched the copper deposits that are under us. There still is a lot more. The method of retrieving it will have to improve just like the iron mining industry went through a change and now they are making pellets; copper mining I think will have to improve the method of extracting copper from the---

Paul: Well we'll never get up to what it has been before, will it?

Alex: We'll not see 55,000 people because they can do so much more with fewer people.

Paul: ANY other reflections, feelings about the future, comparisons with the past? Think the visitors appreciate this area?

Alex: Definitely! We have so many return year after year or 3 years later; when you stop to figure that in 1930 we just started the tourist business and Fort Wilkins was just made a state park in the '20's and there wasn't anybody went over there and now in the last year, 260,000 people went out, that's growth! That's tourist growth! And at one time we had only 3 places to stay in Copper Harbor, now look. And there weren't any motels in Houghton. And look what we have now! We never thought you'd have a Copper Crown motel in Hancock, but it's there and it's ______ whereas the
Hotel Scott never could make a dime, always went in the hole, apparently, but it appeared not to be successful but the possibilities of the rehabilitation of the Quincy Area with the Quincy Hoist and the mine and the shaft house and putting an elevator in there to go right to the top of that and look over the whole area; and have all those mining company houses that are identical make them identical like they were before, and have copper craftsmen inside there and then have the narrow gauge railway going from there down to the smelter; that's going to be a big complex someday.

Paul: Do you think somebody is going to come in and do it?

It's under a non-profit corporation now. Quite possible there will be government subsidies to insure that that be preserved.

Paul: Kind of a historical monument

Very definitely.

And they left everything go to hell.

Well, yes, because nobody took care of it.

All the places you drive to, Lake Linden, Calumet, up to Quincy Hill,

Ya, it's only in the past 10 years that the Quincy Hoist Association was formed, and it's non-profit and so they plowed back all their earnings and their business is increasing so apparently the public has accepted it now. Course the Arcadian Mine is a natural, it's a gold mine! But those people have vision and saw it and they put it in there and more power to them because they took care of it. These old buildings, if they're not going to use 'em, let's tear 'em down. But I think there's a future here somewhere.

What do you do about the snow? Do they plow as well today as 30 years ago?

Alex Oh, yes, better. I remember when Rev. Hokanson first came here. He called me, not belonging to the congregation, so Norm says, talk to Alex Nelson, he's Chamber Manager but he doesn't belong to that congregation. I talked with him for about an hour. He wanted to know about the country, the community, how it was and I sold him on the idea that he should come here and this is just what he wanted; he wanted a community that had a lot of outdoor activity for boys and so this was attractive to him; he could camp out at MacLain Park or not; well then he accepted the job and that same winter we had a record snowfall and I said to Mrs. Hokanson, I forgot to tell you about all the snow we get; she said, oh, we love it. This is good, wonderful. So we're capitalizing on our snow; our snow is now no longer our liability. You're going to have the chair-lift go in over at Ripley Hill and this is where possibly the big complex could be. You could have it right to the East of it, so you would have the ski hill, course, you wouldn't have the golf course then, but lot of other hills; a big possibility up in Keweenaw; but it's hard for us to visualize it. It was hard for Ironwood to visualize when the mines closed in Ironwood and the planners said, use the snow, you got lots of snow, use it; look at it, they've got Indianhead, Powderhorn, and 3 or 4. And it doesn't seem as though one hurts the other; they put up another and business increases.

Paul: Now they're starting to promote skating.

Alex And with our hockey school up here, 460 kids, in 5 different weeks; half of them were local so about 200 families had to come up here and see that their boy was set up all right and then come back and get him and see the final game. And any activity like that, it's tremendous. Rockhounds! When you grew up you never thought about going out to look for agates but now it's a major business. Six years ago we had
the field convention here and since then look at all the rock shops that have set up, the big one right in the C&H warehouse! Ten years ago you wouldn't figure about that, would you, all you knew somebody had a good bunch of agates and you wanted one and he gave you one.

Paul: I want to thank you very much for your time; is there any other thing that you'd like to bring up?

Alex: I think that what can happen here is tremendous possibility for future tourism if we all work together. You can't "freeload", there shouldn't be room for "freeloaders" they should all put their shoulder to the wheel and push and develop and I'm sure that there's a good future in the Copper Country.

Paul: Thank you very much.

(end of tape)
Suomi salutes the people who make this area great.

Suomi College Folklore Album

Father
a. Edward Nelson
b. Calmest

c. Baker

Mother
a. Caroline Nelson
b. Bjer, Norway
c. Housewife, Cook

2 sisters, 3 bros

Father
a. Alexander Nelson
b. Zapan to Horn
c. Reith

Child
a.
b.
c.

Child
a.
b.
c.

Child
a.
b.
c.